

Crowd encouraged stabbing attack, prosecutor claims

THU AUG - 4 1994

Defense says woman was protecting herself

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Deborah Williams was chased down like a hunted animal and stabbed to death by another woman while onlookers chanted "Get that bitch! Get that bitch!" a prosecutor told a jury Wednesday.

"This is a neighborhood in Oakland where life is cheap," Deputy District Attorney Terese Drabec said in her opening statement at Stacey Lee's trial in Alameda County Superior Court.

Drabec said Lee, 20, chased Williams, 32, from Lee's East 14th Street apartment onto 94th Avenue and MacArthur Boulevard last August where she straddled her and stabbed her with a kitchen knife while a crowd egged her on.

Lee's defense attorney said Lee was just protecting herself and her family.

"She stabbed her so she would leave her and her family alone," Deborah Levy told the five-woman, seven-man jury. "Deborah Williams had been inside Lee's apartment building many times before. The building was a refuge to crack smokers and the smell of cocaine would go into her apartment."

Drabec said Williams was just looking for someone who lived in

the building.

Levy also said the 200-pound Lee would not have caught up to the 108-pound Williams during the chase if the crowd had not intervened.

"The crowd are a pack of dogs. They are hunting Ms. Williams. Onica Sutton knocked Williams to the ground with her arm and Mario Trotter smashed a 40-ounce beer bottle over her head," Levy said.

Trotter, 16, testified for the prosecution Wednesday and said he hit Williams with the bottle to impress his friends.

He is serving time in the California Youth Authority for assault.

After the attack, Lee dropped the knife in the gutter, drank a beer and watched the police and ambulance arrive, Drabec said.

Teresa Williams, the victim's sister, said she disagrees with Levy's explanation that the rough East Oakland street life made Lee kill Williams.

"I want to see people stop using their environment as an excuse," said Teresa Williams, who is opening a community outpatient clinic in her sister's name. "I was brought up in the same environment but I would never use my environment to justify killing another person."

Drabec asked the jury to find Lee guilty of first-degree murder. Levy asked for manslaughter.

Upset mother on trial recalls stabbing woman

TUE AUG - 9 1994
By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — A 20-year-old Oakland mother testified Monday that she stabbed another woman to death while a crowd egged her on because she wanted to protect her family from crack cocaine users.

"It was just to hurt her and make her leave my family alone, because it was the only way that she was

going to listen," a tearful Stacey Lee said at her trial in Alameda County Superior Court.

Lee is charged with first-degree murder for chasing Deborah Williams, 32, from Lee's East 14th Street apartment and stabbing her while a crowd of onlookers chanted "Get that bitch!"

Lee said Williams and other people used Lee's apartment stairwell to smoke crack cocaine. Smoke

and a smell like "burnt candy" would drift into her apartment and cause her 2-year-old son to run wildly in circles, she said.

On Aug. 11, 1993, Williams came into Lee's building looking for someone. Lee and Williams argued, and Lee chased after Williams with a kitchen knife, records show.

After "squatting and cutting her," Lee dropped the knife in the gutter, got money from her apart-

ment and bought a beer at the liquor store, she said. She drank it outside and watched the police and ambulance arrive, she testified.

She said she learned the next day from police that Williams had died. "I felt ashamed. I felt bad. I just cried," Lee said.

Other witnesses testified last week that some of the crowd knocked Williams down and smashed a beer bottle on her head.

Jury gets fatal stabbing case

WED AUG 10 1994

FROM STAFF REPORTS

OAKLAND — A jury began deliberating Tuesday whether it was murder or manslaughter when a 20-year-old Oakland woman stabbed another woman to death while a crowd chanted, "Get that bitch!"

Deputy District Attorney Terese Drabec calls it first-degree murder. "Where's the self-defense? Where's the imminent peril?" Drabec asked the jury during closing arguments of Stacey Camille Lee's trial in Alameda County Superior Court Tuesday.

But Lee's defense attorney Deborah Levy told the

jury the Aug. 11, 1993, stabbing was manslaughter done in "the heat of passion. She was just defending herself and her family."

Levy said Lee was tired of people smoking crack cocaine in her East Oakland apartment stairwell and chased Deborah Williams, 32, from the stairwell with a kitchen knife after an argument. While Williams was running down East 14th Street, Onica Sutton "clothes-lined" her with her arm and Mario Trotter smashed a 40-ounce beer bottle over her head, records show. The crowd then chanted, "Get that bitch!" while Lee straddled Williams and stabbed her, Drabec said.

Jury vote prompts Lee mistrial

SAT AUG 13 1994

One juror abstains as 11 say 'murder'

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Eleven jurors called it murder when 19-year-old Stacey Lee stabbed another woman to death before a cheering crowd, but one juror refused to vote, so a mistrial was declared Friday in Superior Court.

The holdout, Howard Beckman, would not vote during the two days of deliberations on whether Lee committed first- or second-degree murder or manslaughter.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Philip Sarkisian dismissed the

jury. Lee will be tried again next year, prosecutor Terese Drabec said.

Beckman, a 55-year-old law student, said he did not want to discuss the case because it was emotionally trying.

The stabbing shocked the public last August, when Lee was arrested for chasing Deborah Williams, 32, down a crowded East Oakland sidewalk and stabbing her with a kitchen knife while onlookers chanted "Get that bitch! Get that bitch!"

People in the crowd knocked Williams down and smashed a beer bottle on her head before Lee stabbed her three times, records show.

Several jurors said they did not buy the explanation given by Lee's defense attorney that Lee was just

protecting her family from people who smoked crack cocaine in her apartment stairwell.

"We didn't believe the line about her protecting her home and family," said juror Larry Herb, 55, of Fremont.

"Everybody in the jury room thought it was a heinous crime and didn't want her back on the street because she'll do it again."

Deborah Williams' sister, Teresa Williams, who is opening a community outpatient clinic in her sister's name, was angered by the mistrial.

"It seemed to me with the evidence they presented it should have been an easy decision: first- or second-degree murder," said Williams, a geophysicist. "Now my family is going to have to sit through a whole

Prosecutor describes stabbing as trial starts

WED MAY 31 1995
FROM STAFF REPORTS

OAKLAND — Stacey Lee knew exactly what she was doing when she chased another woman down an East Oakland street and stabbed her as onlookers chanted "Get that bitch!" an Alameda County prosecutor said Tuesday.

The stabbing amounts to first-degree murder, Deputy District Attorney Terese Drabec said at the start of Lee's second trial in Alameda County Superior Court.

The first trial ended in a mistrial when jurors voted 11 to 1 for guilt.

For this trial, Drabec presented

new testimony from a witness who said she heard Lee shouting "I'm going to kill you" at Deborah Williams as Lee chased her down East 14th Street on Aug. 11, 1993.

People in the crowd knocked down Williams, 32, a 108-pound, crack-addicted mother of three, and smashed a beer bottle over her head.

Lee, a 200-pound, 19-year-old mother, then straddled her and stabbed her three times with a kitchen knife.

Lee's attorney, Deborah Levy, asked the jury to convict Lee of manslaughter.

"This was done in the heat of passion," Levy said.

Woman convicted of first-degree murder

THU JUN 15 1995

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — A young Oakland mother who chased down and stabbed another woman to death on a sidewalk while onlookers cheered was convicted Wednesday of first-degree murder.

Stacey Lee, 21, showed no emotion as the verdict was read in Alameda County Superior Court. She faces 26 years to life in prison and will be sentenced next month.

On Aug. 11, Lee chased Deborah Williams, 32, from Lee's East Oakland apartment stairwell with a knife after an argument. People in the crowd outside knocked Williams down, smashed

a beer bottle on her head and chanted "Get that bitch!" as Lee stabbed her three times.

Lee's attorney said Lee killed Williams in the heat of passion because she was tired of crack addicts smoking outside her apartment. She said the cocaine smoke would drift into Lee's apartment and make her 2-year-old son run wildly in circles.

The nine-man, three-woman jury did not believe the killing was manslaughter or that the crowd made Lee do it, said Deputy District Attorney Terese Drabec.

"They (the jury) said she knew what she was doing when she chased her and she knew what

she was doing when she stabbed her," Drabec said after the verdict. This was Lee's second trial. Her first trial ended in a mistrial last year when one juror refused to deliberate. The other 11 jurors voted for murder.

Williams' aunt, Jan Gates-Williams, said the verdict brings some relief to her family's pain.

"There are no words to describe the horror that we experienced in learning about the way Deborah died," Gates-Williams said. "We would like to express our gratitude to the prosecutor, Terese Drabec, and the jury, because they refused to let Deborah's life and her death become some cold statistic."

Fatal stabbing brings 26 years to life in prison

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — The young Oakland mother who chased down and stabbed another woman to death on a sidewalk while a crowd of on-lookers cheered was sentenced Thursday to 26 years to life in prison.

Stacey Lee, 21, was convicted of first-degree murder last month during her second trial in Alameda County Superior Court. Her first trial ended in a mistrial last year when one juror refused to deliberate.

The case shocked the public when on Aug. 11, 1993, Lee chased Deborah Williams, a 32-year-old mother of three, down the street and stabbed her while the crowd chanted "Get that bitch!"

Lee had fought with Williams in the stairwell of Lee's East 14th Street apartment. Lee said Williams was one of many crack addicts who often smoked cocaine in the stair-

well. Williams was said to be just visiting a neighbor.

After the stabbing, Lee tossed the knife in the gutter, bought a beer and drank it while watching the ambulance and police arrive.

Lee's attorney said Lee killed Williams in the heat of passion because she was tired of cocaine smoke drifting into her apartment and making her 2-year-old son run wildly in circles.

Probation officials who interviewed Lee blamed her violent life on an unstable, drug-scarred upbringing. Her mother was addicted to cocaine, court records show. Lee was raped at age 7 and at age 15 convicted of selling rock cocaine, assaulting a 30-year-old woman with a stick and robbing a 12-year-old girl, records show.

Lee ran away twice from a youth home, lived with her grandmother until her grandmother died and then with her aunt until her aunt was arrested.

Women's tragic backgrounds set scene for Oakland murder

MON JUL 17 1995

By Danielle Cass
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Stacey Lee and Deborah Williams never overcame the drugs and violence that scarred their lives. Their paths crossed on an East Oakland sidewalk, leaving one dead and the other in prison for life.

Raped at age 7, Lee escaped her crack-addicted, abusive mother by selling cocaine, robbing and beating others. She lived with her elderly grandmother until she died, then with her aunt until the aunt was arrested. Though she apparently didn't take hard drugs, she was soon involved with men who were addicted to cocaine and heroin, court and police files show.

Williams, the daughter of Black Panther Party members, was the first graduate of the Black Panther

elementary school. She was a talented musician filled with promise. But when her family started to crumble in junior high, she got hooked on drugs and never got off, authorities say.

The women met two years ago in the stairwell of Lee's East 14th Street apartment, where crack addicts liked to smoke. On Aug. 11, 1993, Lee, 19, chased Williams, a 32-year-old mother of three, from the stairwell and onto the street. People in the crowd knocked her down and chanted "Get that bitch!" as Lee stabbed her.

Lee then drank a beer and watched as the ambulance and paramedics arrived. She was sentenced to 26 years to life in prison Thursday in Alameda County Superior Court, where details of both women's lives have been revealed.



Lee



Williams

The killing, which shocked the public and even the most hardened police detectives, marked the intersection of the sad lives of two Oakland natives who tried in vain to beat drugs and violence.

Born to politically active parents

Please see **Murder**, A-9

In the early 1960s, Williams was a vibrant child full of potential, said her sister, Teresa Williams. A gifted trombone player, she was the first graduate of the East Oakland Community Learning Center, a school run by the Black Panthers.

But at her mostly white junior high school, Williams' world fell apart. Her parents divorced. Left to raise six children alone, Williams' mother worked nights and studied welding by day. Williams was crippled by low self-esteem and fell into a crowd that smoked rock cocaine.

When Lee was born 13 years after Williams, her world was already poisoned by crack cocaine. Her mother was a crack addict. Her mother's boyfriend raped her at age 7.

By 11, she was selling rock cocaine. She needed the money because her abusive mother used the welfare checks for drugs, said Lee's attorney, Deborah Levy.

About four years later, Lee was convicted of selling rock cocaine to an undercover officer, beating a 30-year-old woman with a stick and robbing a 12-year-old girl after knocking her down and choking

her, records show.

Sent to a group youth home in San Diego, Lee stole a car and ran away. She got pregnant at 17 by her crack-using boyfriend, who was 30 and married. Her next boyfriend was a heroin and cocaine addict whose drug use gave him a stroke in early 1993.

Meanwhile, Williams was trying to quit drugs. For the sake of her three young children, she wanted to leave her physically abusive, drug-addicted boyfriend and clean up her life.

But Williams, her mother and sister were told by health and county officials that every recovery program was full. All Williams was given was another welfare check. She stayed clean two months, then fell back to her boyfriend and rock cocaine.

"When my sister hit rock bottom, if there had been some program that would say, 'OK, we'll take you right now,' she might be alive now," said her sister, Teresa Williams, 30, a geophysicist.

Williams now gives motivational lectures and plans to open a drug recovery center to help women like her sister.

"There aren't enough services

out there for drug-addicted women and the ones that are out there are understaffed and underfunded," Teresa Williams said.

By age 19, Lee was caring for her wheelchair-bound boyfriend and 2-year-old son. Lee and Williams tangled a number of times, once, according to Levy, when Lee found Williams smoking cocaine in her hallway. One August night, Lee said she exploded with anger.

Lee said she didn't mean to kill Williams, even though witnesses testified she ran down the street screaming: "I'm going to kill you!" Eleven jurors in Lee's first trial and 12 jurors in her second trial called it deliberate, intentional murder.

For Teresa Williams, who still chokes back tears when describing how her sister died helpless on a dirty sidewalk, relief came for the first time Thursday when Stanley Lee, Stacey's father, ran up to her outside the courthouse.

"He said he was sorry for what his daughter did. He just lost his son (to murder) and he wanted to apologize for the pain he caused our whole family," Teresa Williams said. "I was really touched. That's all I needed to hear. I feel better now that I know someone has apologized."